

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Forest Care program is opening in Big Bear Valley**

Forest Care is ready to help Big Bear Valley landowners pay for reducing hazardous fuels on their lands. On September 15, Forest Care will be available to residents of Big Bear Lake, Big Bear City, Angelus Oaks, Barton Flats, Forest Falls, and Mountain Home Village. A cost-share program, Forest Care reimburses private property owners up to 75% for the cost of thinning their small diameter live trees on densely treed lots. This innovative forest health and fire safety program has already been a huge success in Crestline and Twin Peaks, CA. Over sixty participating landowners have met with a professional forester. Many of them have completed the necessary forest thinning and have properties that are now healthier, safer, and more attractive. Forest Care is here to help residents of Big Bear Valley in caring for their portion of our great mountain forest!

With fire season heating up and the recent Sawtooth and Millard Complex Fires still fresh in our minds, defensible space is a priority for all mountain communities. Forest Care helps landowners clear the required 100 feet of defensible space and also manage their forested property. Forest management is critical because long-term fire suppression has resulted in over-dense neighborhood forests, creating an unacceptable fire-risk and a forest health crisis. Much of this can be mitigated by removing some of the small-diameter trees, pruning larger trees and trimming overgrown brush. Natural fire disturbance has a similar impact on the forest, so in absence of fire, private property owners should thin the vegetation to healthy levels. Having too many trees competing for limited resources can result in

stressed conditions. Stressed trees are more susceptible to diseases and pathogens, including the native bark beetle, and more prone to fire because of their dried needles and branches.

Forest Care makes forest thinning easy and affordable. Private properties smaller than 5 acres, with a high tree density (over 200 trees per acre) qualify for Forest Care. If a landowner thinks they may qualify, Forest Care will arrange for a professional forester to meet them on their property to create a fuels management plan. Together, the landowner and forester determine which trees smaller than 12" in diameter need to be removed for forest health and fire safety. Once the Forest Care plan is designed, the landowner can either hire a licensed timber operator to complete the work or do the work themselves. After the thinning has been completed, Forest Care will reimburse the property owner for 75% of the costs of removing small trees (under 12" in diameter), brush, and pruning remaining trees

Forest Care is a cost-share program administered by the San Bernardino National Forest Association and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Funding for Forest Care comes from a federal fuels reduction grant provided by the United States Forest Service. Community partners include Big Bear City Fire, City of Big Bear Lake Fire, San Bernardino County Fire, and the local Fire Safe Councils. This unique partnership between a local non-profit, state and federal agencies and community organizations provides mountain residents with the highest level of expertise and professionalism.

Celebrate with us as we kick-off Forest Care in Big Bear Valley on September 12 at the Big Bear Discovery Center. The National Forest Association's mobile fire education exhibit will be on site to allow visitors the chance to feel the heat of a wildfire. Visitors can also experience the San Bernardino County's mobile Safety House exhibit to learn how to be safer at home. Big Bear Valley residents are also encouraged to come by

the Big Bear Discovery Center on Saturday, September 23 to meet with Forest Care staff who can answer your questions and help you contribute to a healthier, more forest-friendly community. For more information contact Forest Care at 1-888-883-THIN or [www.sbnfa.org](http://www.sbnfa.org).

*The San Bernardino National Forest Association (SBNFA) manages 10 volunteer and visitor programs, including Forest Care. SBNFA is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization and is funded through grants, donations and corporate sponsorships. The San Bernardino National Forest Association exists to support the USDA Forest Service in carrying out its mission of caring for the land and serving people, and to bring people, partners and funding resources to important forest projects. Forest Care is primarily funded through a grant from the USDA Forest Service. It is administered through both SBNFA and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. For more information on Forest Care, contact Shawna Meyer at (909) 382-2697.*